Appendix C

Routt National Forest Alternative D Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines

APPENDIX C
ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST ALTERNATIVE D
FOREST PLAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

ANTHROPOGENIC DISTURBANCE STANDARD (P)

If anthropogenic disturbance[1] exceeds 5 percent for the applicable Colorado MZ, the USFS will require additional project mitigation to offset the resulting loss of GRSG habitat. The Authorized Officer, with concurrence from CPW, may authorize disturbance in excess of the 5-percent disturbance cap without requiring additional mitigation where data-based documentation is available to warrant a conclusion that GRSG populations are healthy and stable at objective levels or increasing in the Colorado MZ and that the development will not adversely affect GRSG populations due to habitat loss or disruptive activities. When necessary, the USFS will require additional effective mitigation to be conducted in priority GRSG habitat or, less preferably, in general GRSG habitat (dependent on the area-specific ability to increase GRSG populations). The USFS will require additional effective mitigation first within the same population area where the impact is realized, and if not possible, and mitigation within the same WAFWA Management Zone as the impact will be required.

SAGEBRUSH CANOPY COVER STANDARD (P)

The USFS will retain, for each Colorado MZ, a minimum of 70 percent of the ecological sites capable of supporting 12 percent canopy cover of Wyoming big sagebrush or 15 percent canopy cover of mountain big sagebrush in sagebrush habitat. The USFS will manage for a total disturbance cap of less than 30 percent, including all loss of sagebrush from all causes including anthropogenic disturbance, wildfire, plowed field agriculture, and vegetation treatments. This cap is applied to priority habitat that supports sagebrush ecological sites in the MZ. Sites capable of supporting sagebrush habitat will count against the cap until

[1]Anthropogenic disturbance is defined in **Appendix F**, Disturbance Cap Management.

they have recovered to at least 12 percent canopy cover in Wyoming big sagebrush- and 15 percent in mountain big sagebrush-dominated areas.[2] Note:

- Only mappable stands of cheatgrass and pinyon-juniper encroachment will count against the disturbance cap
- Irrigated meadows do not count against the cap
- On a site-by-site basis, independent of cap management issues, the USFS will not allow vegetation treatments with the potential to adversely affect GRSG populations

MOTORIZED TRAVEL CLOSURE GUIDELINE (ADH)

Motorized travel should be restricted seasonally to restore GRSG habitat connectivity.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION STANDARD (P)

The USFS will not allow route construction and road upgrades that adversely affect GRSG populations by causing habitat loss or disruptive activities. The USFS will require new road construction or road realignments to comply with the appropriate standard from the Gold Book (Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development, US Department of Agriculture and US Department of the Interior).

ROUTE RESTORATION STANDARD (P)

When reseeding roads, primitive roads, and trails, the USFS will use seed mixes appropriate for GRSG ecological conditions and will consider the use of appropriate subspecies of sagebrush seed and transplanted sagebrush.

SPECIAL USE AUTHORIZATION RESTRICTION STANDARD (P)

The USFS will not authorize recreation or lands special uses that adversely affect GRSG populations by causing habitat loss or disruptive activities except where such limitation would make accessing valid existing rights impracticable.

ROAD AND UTILITY EASEMENT AND AUTHORIZATION STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will avoid offering easements and authorizing new road and utility corridor uses that would affect GRSG habitat, except:

- Within designated transmission corridors
- On lands encumbered by existing road or utility corridor uses
- In new locations where there is a compelling reason for that site location

[2]Details about the disturbance cap are in **Appendix F**, Disturbance Cap Management.

UTILITY AUTHORIZATION PERCH DETERRENT STANDARD (P)

The USFS will require permit holders to remove, bury, or modify existing utility lines and bury or design new utility lines to deter predation of GRSG by raptors.

LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT STANDARD (P)

The USFS will retain public ownership of priority GRSG habitat. The USFS will only allow federal land sale or exchange when:

- There is mixed ownership, and land exchanges would allow for additional or more contiguous federal ownership patterns within the priority GRSG habitat area
- There are isolated federal parcels where land ownership adjustments would not alter GRSG populations (e.g., no leks)

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING GUIDELINE (P)

When developing allotment management plans, the USFS will consider GRSG habitat requirements in conjunction with all resource values and give preference to GRSG habitat unless site-specific circumstances warrant an exemption.

FORAGE RESERVE GUIDELINE (ADH)

When a permittee voluntarily relinquishes grazing preference, the allotment should be converted to a forage reserve that will remain available for use on a temporary, nonrenewable basis. Temporary nonrenewable permits should be authorized in reserve allotments to meet resource objectives elsewhere such as rest or deferment due to fire.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will include terms and conditions in grazing permits that assure plant growth requirements are met and residual forage remains available for GRSG hiding cover. The USFS will establish permit terms and conditions in conjunction with grazing strategies to ensure that the timing and level of utilization results in wet meadows with diverse species richness, including a component of perennial forbs, relative to site potential (e.g., reference state).

NEW LIVESTOCK WATER DEVELOPMENTS STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will not authorize new water developments that adversely impact GRSG that result in habitat loss. The USFS will consider adjacent or downstream wetland habitat when a project entails diversion from a spring or seep. The USFS will ensure that adequate long-term grazing management is in effect before authorizing water developments that may increase levels of use or change season of use.

EXISTING LIVESTOCK WATER DEVELOPMENTS STANDARD (P)

Livestock water developments in springs and seeps must maintain the continuity of the predevelopment riparian area if it is needed to maintain GRSG populations or reverse a downward population trend caused by habitat loss.

EXISTING LIVESTOCK STRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS STANDARD (P)

The USFS will authorize range structural improvements that reduce GRSG populations or contribute to a downward population trend caused by habitat loss or mortality.

LIVESTOCK SUPPLEMENTS STANDARD (P)

The USFS will not allow placement of mineral and salt supplements near water sources and leks. The USFS will allow placement in locations that enhance livestock distribution.

FLUID MINERALS EXPLORATORY DRILLING TIMING RESTRICTION STANDARD (P)

The USFS will not authorize surface-disturbing activities related to exploratory drilling during GRSG nesting and early brood-rearing from March 1 through June 30.

FLUID MINERALS GEOPHYSICAL EXPLORATION STANDARD (P)

The USFS will limit geophysical exploration to projects that obtain information for projects in areas adjacent to state or fee lands. The USFS will require applicants to use helicopter-portable drilling, wheeled or tracked vehicles on existing roads, or other approved methods. The USFS will not allow operations during GRSG nesting and early brood-rearing from March 1 through June 30.

FLUID MINERALS EXCEPTION, MODIFICATION, AND WAIVER GUIDELINE (P)

Exceptions, modifications, and waivers may be applied to the Fluid Minerals Surface Use Standard, Fluid Minerals Surface Use Guideline, and Fluid Minerals Timing Restriction Standard.

Exception: The Authorized Officer may grant an exception:

- Where multiple wells are drilled from one pad in a multi-year operation, the drilling equipment may remain in place during the closed period
- Where topography and/or terrain are such that surface occupancy or disturbance within 4 miles of a lek will not adversely affect GRSG populations due to habitat loss or disruptive activities during lekking or early brood rearing
- If environmental analysis and coordination with CPW indicate that the proposed action could be conditioned so as not to affect breeding behavior, nest attendance, egg/chick survival, or nesting success
- If the proponent, the BLM, and CPW negotiate compensation that would satisfactorily offset the anticipated loss of nesting habitat or nesting activities
- If actions are designed to enhance the long-term utility or availability of suitable nest habitat

Modification: The Authorized Officer may grant a modification:

- To the size or dates of the timing limitation area if environmental analysis and coordination with CPW indicate that the proposed action could be conditioned so as not to affect nest attendance, egg/chick survival, or nesting success
- To the seasonal or daily timeframes if operations could be conditioned to not disrupt lek attendance, breeding behavior, and bird distribution within a 0.6-mile radius of the lek during the breeding period
- To the timeframes in nesting habitat if appropriate monitoring data show the operation will allow 90 percent of initial nesting attempts to progress through hatch

Waiver: The Authorized Officer may grant a waiver:

- If CPW determines that the described lands are incapable of serving the long-term requirements of GRSG nesting habitat and that these ranges no longer warrant consideration as components of GRSG nesting habitat

FLUID MINERALS SURFACE USE STANDARD (P)

The USFS will require a NSO stipulation on new leases to reduce impacts on GRSG. The USFS will require that the Surface Use Plan of Operations for proposed operations addresses, at a minimum, project features related to potential GRSG impacts. The USFS will require descriptions of anticipated noise, density and amount of disturbance, mechanical movement (pump jacks), permanent and temporary facilities, traffic, phases of development over time, offsite mitigation, and expected periods of use. Project features that are not addressed in the Surface Use Plan of Operations shall be noted in the project file along with a rationale for not including them. The Exception, Modification, and Waiver Guideline applies to this standard.

FLUID MINERALS SURFACE USE GUIDELINE (G AND C)

To reduce impacts to GRSG, surface occupancy should not be allowed on new leases in general and connectivity habitat where drainage is expected to facilitate directional drilling from non-habitat areas. The Exception, Modification, and Waiver Guideline applies to this guideline.

FLUID MINERALS TIMING RESTRICTION STANDARD (P)

This standard is intended to apply to exploration, construction, drilling, fracking, and completion activities, but may also be applied to operation, maintenance, and production activities that may disrupt reproductive activities of GRSG. Where consistent with valid existing rights and development requirements, the USFS will prohibit surface occupancy or disturbance within 4 miles of a lek during lekking and early brood rearing from March 1 through June 30. If the

entire lease is within 4 miles of a lek, limit permitted disturbances as defined in **Appendix F**, Disturbance Cap Management. The Exception, Modification, and Waiver Guideline applies to this standard.

FLUID MINERAL MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN STANDARD (P)

The USFS will require Master Development Plans in lieu of Applications for Permit to Drill processing for all but exploratory wells.

FLUID MINERAL UNITIZATION GUIDELINE (P)

Unitization should be encouraged within Colorado MZs when necessary for proper development and operation of an area or to facilitate more orderly (phased and/or clustered) development as a means of minimizing adverse effects on GRSG.

FLUID MINERAL RECLAMATION BOND STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will require a full reclamation bond specific to the site for all future actions. The USFS will ensure that the bonds are sufficient for costs needed to contract the work necessary to fully restore the lands to the conditions found prior to disturbance.

LOCATABLE MINERALS GUIDELINE (P)

Appropriate effective mitigation for GRSG conservation should be included in locatable minerals Plans of Operations. Seasonal restrictions should be applied if deemed necessary.

SALABLE MINERAL MATERIALS STANDARD (ADH)

To meet GRSG habitat conservation objectives, the USFS will require reclamation and restoration of mineral pits no longer in use.

HABITAT RESTORATION (SEEDED AREAS) GUIDELINE (P)

Existing seeded areas in and adjacent to priority GRSG habitats that are currently composed of primarily introduced perennial grasses should be restored to sagebrush or habitat of higher quality for GRSG. Seeded areas should be retained if they fit one of the following criteria:

- Provide value in conserving or enhancing the rest of the priority habitats
- Are part of an allotment management plan/conservation plan
- Are an integral part of a livestock management plan and reduce grazing pressure in important sagebrush habitats
- Serve as a strategic fuels management area

HABITAT RESTORATION OBJECTIVES GUIDELINE (ADH)

GRSG habitat objectives should be included in habitat restoration projects. GRSG habitat requirements should be considered in conjunction with all resource values and given preference unless site specific circumstances warrant

an exemption. Seasonal habitat availability should be identified and treatments in areas that are thought to be limiting GRSG distribution and abundance should be given a high priority.

VEGETATION TREATMENT CANOPY COVER STANDARD (P)

Vegetation treatments in priority habitat must conserve, enhance, or restore GRSG habitat. Treatments must not reduce sagebrush canopy cover to less than 15 percent unless a vegetation management objective requires additional reduction in sagebrush cover to meet strategic protection of priority GRSG habitat and conserve habitat quality for the species.

VEGETATION TREATMENT TIMING RESTRICTIONS STANDARD (P)

The USFS will not authorize vegetation treatment activity within 4 miles of a lek during lekking and early brood rearing from March 1 to June 30. The Exception, Modification, and Waiver Guideline applies to this standard.

VEGETATION TREATMENT LOCATION RESTRICTION STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will not use fire to treat sagebrush in less than 12-inch precipitation zones (e.g., Wyoming big sagebrush or other xeric sagebrush species) except for creation of fuel breaks when all other treatment opportunities have been explored, site-specific variables allow, and cheatgrass is a very minor component in the understory.

VEGETATION TREATMENT FUELS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE (ADH)

Vegetation treatments in GRSG habitats should be designed to strategically facilitate firefighter safety, reduce wildfire threats, and reduce extreme fire behavior. This may involve spatially arranging new vegetation treatments with past treatments, vegetation with fire-resistant seral stages, natural barriers, and roads in order to constrain fire spread and growth. This may require vegetation treatments to be implemented in a more linear versus block design. During fuels management project design, the utility of using livestock to strategically reduce fine fuels should be considered. Grazing management that accomplishes this objective while minimizing impacts on native perennial grasses should be implemented.

WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION STANDARD (ADH)

Having provided for firefighter and public safety, the USFS will aggressively suppress wildfire in GRSG habitat. If suppression activities occur in GRSG habitat, the USFS will consider GRSG habitat requirements in conjunction with all resource values and give preference to protecting GRSG habitat unless site-specific circumstances warrant an exemption.

VEGETATION TREATMENT RECOVERY STANDARD (ADH)

The USFS will design post-fuels management to ensure long-term persistence of seeded or pre-burn native plants. The USFS will implement temporary or long-term changes in livestock grazing, wild horse and burro, and travel management to achieve and maintain vegetation management objectives to benefit GRSG and

their habitats. Treated areas should be rested from grazing for at least two full growing seasons unless vegetation recovery requires additional rest.

REVEGETATION AND SEEDING GUIDELINE (ADH)

Native plant seeds should be used for vegetation treatments based on availability, adaptation (site potential), probability for success, and the vegetation management objectives for the area covered by the treatment. Where probability of success or native seed availability is low, species that meet soil stability and hydrologic function objectives, as well as vegetation and GRSG habitat objectives, should be used.

SEED COLLECTION GUIDELINE (ADH)

Prior to vegetation treatment activity, priority plant species should be identified and seed of understory plants and sagebrush subspecies important to GRSG should be collected. In fire-prone areas where sagebrush seed is required for GRSG habitat restoration, seed harvest areas should be established that are managed for seed production and are a priority for protection from outside disturbances.